



LITTLE KNOWN LINCOLN EPISODES

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Little Known Lincoln Episodes

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FORTY-SEVEN words were used by Abraham Lincoln to tell his life story, prepared for the Dictionary of Congress in 1858. Now, over four thousand books and pamphlets have been written about him, and there is a steadily increasing flow of Lincoln literature each year. Yet there are many little-known episodes in Lincoln's life. Those noted here are arranged in chronological order.

The Lincoln Family migrated to Indiana in 1816

The First Indiana Orphanage

ORPHANED by the death of their mother two years after the removal to the Indiana wilderness, Abraham Lincoln and his sister, Sarah, were joined the following year by three other orphans, the children of their new stepmother. One more unfortunate youth found his way into the Lincoln cabin also, making three groups of orphans under one roof. The home of Thomas Lincoln might thus seem to be rightly called the first Indiana orphanage.

This composite group of children contributed much to the making of Abraham Lincoln. After hearing a sermon preached at the Pigeon Church, Abraham would come home, seat the orphans on a fallen tree trunk, and deliver the parson's discourse, some-

times even improving on the original sermon with all the mannerisms and gestures included. When Ratcliff Boone or other politicians would speak in the community, the orphans again would be corralled, and Abraham, the embryo statesman, mounted on a stump, would discuss the political issues of the day.

Those timely rehearsals did much to develop Lincoln into an extraordinary orator even in his earlier years. A pioneer settler of Illinois offers this appraisal of his talent: "I was then fresh from Kentucky and had heard many of her great orators. It seemed to me then as it seems to me now, that I never heard a more effective speaker."

**In 1832 Abraham Lincoln announced as a candidate for the
Legislature of Illinois**

A Stolen Horse Throws a Candidate

TWO years after Abraham Lincoln reached the Illinois county, he became a candidate for the Legislature, although he was but twenty-three years of age. His published political platform reveals he was mentally alert, as well as vocally active, while living in the Indiana wilderness.

Just a few days after his candidacy was announced, the Black Hawk War broke out. Lincoln enlisted and was elected captain of his company. The war was soon over, however, and, on July 16, 1832, he was mustered out of service at Whitewater, Michigan Territory, now Wisconsin. Lincoln had been a member of a mounted company and proposed to get up early the next morning and ride back to New Salem as rapidly as the horse could carry him. But, alas, someone was up before him and stole his horse.

There were now just twenty days intervening before the election, and he was three hundred miles from the voting precinct.

He must have known that the loss of the horse virtually meant the loss of the election. He had lived in New Salem but eight months and was practically unknown outside the community. Obliged to walk most of the way home, he could not have arrived in New Salem more than one week before the election. Of the ten candidates in the field, four of whom were to be elected, he ran a good seventh. All but three of the two hundred and eighty-one votes recorded in the New Salem precinct were cast for him. His only political defeat at the hands of the people he must have blamed on the stolen horse.

The wedding of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd took place
on November 4, 1842

The Reluctant Lover

ABRAHAM LINCOLN first met Mary Todd of Lexington, Kentucky, in 1837 when she was visiting her sister in Springfield, Illinois. Two years later she returned from Kentucky to make Springfield her permanent home.

By January 1, 1841, the courtship of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd had reached a stage where an announcement of the wedding day was anticipated. It was this New Year's Day, in 1841, which Lincoln referred to later on as "the fatal first of January." There are some fanciful stories which tell of a bride "bedecked in veil and silken gown" left waiting at the altar for a groom who did not appear. Careful students of Lincoln history now discard this and similar gossip.

Those who have studied Lincoln's attitude towards women are convinced that he was reluctant to enter into a marriage with one whom he did not feel he could make happy, because he could not furnish her with the financial means to move in the society to

which she had been accustomed. The fatal first of January, 1841, was nothing more than Abraham Lincoln's New Year's resolution to tell Mary Todd he did not feel it would be right for him to marry her. The following year, however, this resolution was not renewed, and a reconciliation was brought about between the lovers. Lincoln wrote to a friend, "I cannot but reproach myself for even wishing to be happy while she is otherwise." Then, possibly still reluctantly, Abraham married Mary.

A series of seven debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas were arranged in 1858

The Big and Little Giants

TRADITION has it that Mary Todd was courted by both Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas. Whether or not this is true, it is quite certain that no two statesmen who have ever been brought together in public life were so different in personal appearance as these two men. One was exceedingly tall, the other extremely short; one was lean, the other was fat; one wore ill-fitting clothes, the other was well-groomed.

There were other contrasts that were noticeable. One had a high-pitched voice, the other a low-toned voice; one was a droll, rural citizen, the other of a brisk urban type; one was free from the bad habits of the day, while the other openly indulged in them; one was little known outside his own state, the other was widely known throughout the nation.

Politically the contrasts were just as marked; and presented an interesting paradox. One was born in the south, the other in the north; the southerner was for freeing the slaves, the northerner was for holding them; the southerner became the leader of the north, the northerner became the champion of the south.

Furthermore, in the senatorial contest of 1858, Abraham Lincoln polled a much larger popular vote than his opponent, Stephen

A. Douglas, but, owing to an improper division of districts, the candidate receiving the fewer popular votes was favored by a larger number of the electoral body. With Lincoln's defeat of Douglas for the presidency in 1860, the differences in opinion at least were harmonized, and the big and little giants united in an effort to save the Union.

Lincoln started to grow a beard immediately after his election to the Presidency in 1860

Puttin' on (H) airs

IN August, 1860, an eleven year old girl wrote to Abraham Lincoln: "I have four brothers and part of them will vote for you anyway and if you will let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest to vote for you; you would look a great deal better for your face is so sad and thin. All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husbands to vote for you and then you would be President."

Lincoln won the election, however, without resorting to the campaign suggestion of his correspondent, Grace Bedell; but immediately after the election he did give more attention to his personal appearance and began to wear a beard. This was naturally the subject of much political-lampooning and one wit in a newspaper dated December 27, 1860, submitted this item, "They say Old Abe is raising a pair of whiskers. Some individual of the cockney persuasion remarked that he was 'a puttin' on (h) airs.'"

The sequel to Grace Bedell's letter is found in the inaugural trip to Washington. When the President's train stopped at Westfield, Chautauqua County, New York, Mr. Lincoln stepped to the platform and inquired of the large crowd which had assembled if little Grace Bedell, with whom he had had some correspondence,

was present. She was there and came forward, whereupon Mr. Lincoln stepped down from the car, shook her hand, kissed her, and remarked, "You see, Grace, I let my whiskers grow for you."

The inaugural train left Springfield, Illinois, for Washington on February 11, 1861

First Attempt to Assassinate a President

A FEW days after the presidential train passed through Westfield, an occasion occurred which stands out in vivid contrast to the President's recognition of the little child.

Allan Pinkerton, the dean of American detectives, kept a journal in which we may find his belief in a well-organized plot to assassinate Abraham Lincoln on his way to the inaugural ceremonies. Pinkerton writes, "The leaders finally fully determined that the assassination should take place at the Calvert Street Depot, Baltimore . . . When Mr. Lincoln should attempt to pass through the narrow passage leading to the street some roughs were to raise a row on the outside, and all the police would rush away to quell the disturbance. At this moment, the police being withdrawn, Mr. Lincoln would find himself in a dense, excited, and hostile crowd, hustled and jammed, and then the fatal blow was to be struck."

Pinkerton advised Lincoln of the plot when he reached Philadelphia and urged him to depart for Washington that night. This Lincoln refused to do. The next day, Washington's birthday, February 22, 1861, he spoke at Independence Hall. Here in the cradle of the republic and on the anniversary of the first President's birth, Lincoln said that he would "rather be assassinated on the spot than surrender those principles" for which the fathers of the nation died. That night Mr. Lincoln was escorted to Washington under the direction of Pinkerton, and the first or-

ganized attempt to assassinate a President of the United States of America had been foiled.

On May 10, 1861, Lincoln proclaimed martial law and the Civil War was on

The Tragedies of the White House

THE preservation of his own life gave Lincoln little concern after his arrival in Washington, although he was in constant danger. The White House could very appropriately have been draped in mourning during the entire period of Lincoln's administration. There was a long line of sad-faced mothers and widows continually seeking to interview the President, and the horror of the war settled down over the presidential mansion like a great shroud.

Lincoln's own family circle was stricken. His third child, Willie, then eleven years of age, was taken ill and died. With all the burdens of the nation resting on his shoulders, this new sorrow came doubly hard, but a still greater affliction was to follow.

The death of Willie completely upset the mental poise of Abraham Lincoln's wife, the mother of his children. One recent writer qualified to speak with authority on the subject claims that the death of Willie was indirectly responsible for the mental collapse of Mrs. Lincoln, and that for the rest of his life Abraham Lincoln lived with a wife who was on the verge of insanity.

Elizabeth Keckley, who was an employee in the White House in 1862, recalls that during one of Mrs. Lincoln's hysterical outbursts, the President put his arm about her and, while they were standing by a window from which a hospital for the insane was visible, remarked, "Mary, if you do not control yourself we will have to put you over there."

The dedication of the battlefield at Gettysburg took place on
November 19, 1863

Five Gettysburg Addresses

ABRAHAM LINCOLN not only liberated a race held in compulsory unrewarded labor, but did as much for American oratory—he freed it from the elaborate and pompous style then in popular favor. The Gettysburg address stands pre-eminently as a composition demonstrating the eloquence of simplicity.

In his Gettysburg address, Lincoln stated that the words he said there would not long be remembered. They will never be forgotten. The real problem has been to learn just exactly what he said there. Instead of but one Gettysburg address, there are five written in Lincoln's own hand. It is true they are all very much alike, and the sentiment expressed in each of them is identical; yet, realizing that no address of any man has been so often cast in metal and engraved in stone, it does seem to be of paramount importance that every word should be reproduced exactly as he spoke it on that immortal occasion.

At least two copies of the address were written by Lincoln before its delivery on November 19, 1863. Shortly after the dedication at Gettysburg, Edward Everett requested a transcript for the Sanitary Fair at New York City. Two others were made for George Bancroft, the historian; the first one he retained, and the last one was presented to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Fair at Baltimore. This last draft published in facsimile in *Autographed Leaves of our Country's Authors*, has become the authorized version of the address. It was written by Lincoln after he had compared the stenographic reports of what he said with his own copy used at Gettysburg. It contains two hundred and seventy words.



I happen,
temporarily, to occupy this
White House. I am a living
witness that any one of your
children may look to come here
as my father's child has.

A. Lincoln

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